

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

The present invention relates to SZP polypeptides and nucleic acids encoding the polypeptides. The invention further relates to methods of making and using the polypeptides and nucleic acids. Also, the invention relates to immortalized chondrocytes or SZP-producing cells and methods of using the cells. The invention also relates to a method of culturing immortalized or non-immortalized chondrocytes in serum-free medium. The invention also relates to a method of imaging an articular surface or synovium of a joint using detectably tagged SZP or detectably tagged SZP binding proteins.

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